

Servingware Purchasing Guidelines



The Office of Sustainability has developed guidelines for purchasing servingware products for County functions and events. As part of the County's overall commitment to sustainability, County departments can minimize waste and practice fiscal responsibility. Following these suggestions will help the County to reduce waste and also set an example for citizens.

We recognize that each division may have unique needs that require the use of products that are not on our list of recommendations. However, it is important that all divisions reduce waste. Therefore, we are offering guidelines for the **best choices** that you can make for ordering serving ware, **better choices** to make, and the **worst choices** to make. Small steps in making conscious purchasing decisions will add up to a large impact upon reducing waste. These guidelines also assist in proper disposal of items.

General Guidelines for Food and Drink Supplies

Best Choice Examples

The best choice is one that avoids waste altogether.

- Consider choosing washable “real” dinnerware, cutlery, napkins, and cups for formal catered events.
- Serve beverages from a dispenser into cups, preferably reusable or compostable ones. Contact us at the Office of Sustainability if you need a dispenser.
- In some office settings, it may be feasible to keep a set of informal dinnerware in break rooms/kitchen for shared use by employees. These items may be used for group meetings as well as for self-service and self-clean-up for “waste free” lunches. When considering this option, please be aware of health and safety issues regarding sanitation of dishes if a dishwasher is not available.
- Employees are requested to use reusable cups or bottles for beverages at work. Contact us at the Office of Sustainability if your employees need a County drinking container.

Better Choice Examples

The better choice is one that reduces waste.

- Choose the smallest size cups, plates, or napkins needed.
- Paper goods (cups, plates, napkins) are a good choice as they will eventually break down in a landfill. Choose products with recycled content.
- Clear biodegradable cups are good for formal events. These cups are typically made from corn or sugarcane byproducts and display a green stripe.
- Biodegradable cutlery is also available.
- Biodegradable items and/or compostable items may be clear but they are **not plastic** and therefore should not be placed in a recycling container; dispose of these in the garbage.
- Plastic drinking cups may be recycled once empty.
- Plastic cups with recycled content are identified with a blue stripe.
- If you are in a hurry and do not have time to order supplies, Publix Greenwise Market paper products are made with 100% recycled materials – even the packaging.

Worst Choices

The worst choice is one that produces waste that persists in the environment. The following choices are strongly discouraged:

- Single-use Styrofoam dinnerware and cups.
- Individually-wrapped cutlery “picnic” sets (not only is the wrapper waste, but diners may not need the whole set of items included).
- Bottles, cups, and cans that are not recycled after use.
- Plastic plates and bowls that are not recycled after use.

Some Recommendations for Servingware Procurement

These products are listed as **suggestions**. They represent good selections based on both price and environmental impact.

**Indicates discounted price.*

Plates

*Sustainable Earth 9" Compostable Paper Plates – Staples (\$0.05/item)**



These plates are made from discarded sugarcane fibers. Sugarcane is annually renewable. These plates are also compostable. Although Leon County does not offer municipal composting, these items will break down in the sanitary landfill, unlike Styrofoam or plastic. This plate is safe for the microwave, is durable, and has excellent consumer reviews. These plates can be used at indoor or outdoor events. **Disposal: landfill.**

*Dixie 9" Paper Plates – Staples (\$0.01/item)**



For informal events that do not call for a sturdy plate, these are a good choice. The plates are microwave safe. Because these plates are made of plant-based materials, they will break down in a landfill, unlike Styrofoam or plastic. These plates may be used at informal events that serve light and non-greasy food, such as cold sandwiches. **Disposal: landfill.**

Member's Mark 9" Clear Plastic Plates – Sam's Club (\$0.22/item)



These plates are made from a sturdy plastic that is recyclable. They are ideal only for formal occasions, but are added to this recommendation list because they have the potential to be re-used. If they are not washed and re-used, then the plates may be wiped clean and placed in a recycling container. **Disposal: recycling bin if wiped, landfill if not.**

Cups

For any event, paper cups may be an environmentally responsible choice, because when they are thrown away, they will decompose in a landfill, unlike their Styrofoam counterparts.

*Dixie Pathways 5 oz. Paper Cold Cups – Staples (\$0.03/item)**



For informal occasions that serve cold drinks, a smaller paper cup may be used. These types of cups may be bought from any store. Use the smallest item to fit the need. **Disposal: landfill.**

World Centric 12 oz. Biodegradable Hot Cup – Sam's Club (\$0.07/item)



This is a slightly larger hot cup that may be used when serving drinks at either indoor or outdoor occasions. These cups in particular are made from Forest Stewardship Council certified timber. **Disposal: landfill.**

World Centric 12 oz. Biodegradable Cold Cup – Sam's Club (\$0.07/item)



When aesthetics are a priority, a good choice is a clear biodegradable cold cup. This product in particular is made from plant material, and will break down in a landfill. **Disposal: landfill.**

EcoProducts BlueStripe Cold Cup - www.ecoproductsstore.com (\$.26/item)



BlueStripe™ Cold Cups are 25% recycled PET (rPET) plastic. 500 ct. convenience case. **Disposal: recycling bin once empty.**

Napkins

When choosing a napkin, choose the size that fits the event. Reserve larger dinner napkins for formal occasions. While all paper napkins will break down in a landfill, you can top that off with purchasing those made from recycled material. The napkins listed below in particular are made from 100% recycled fibers, 60% of which is post-consumer material.



Marcal 100% Premium Recycled 12.5" x 11.4" Luncheon Napkins – Sam's Club/Staples/Office Depot (\$0.01/item). **Disposal: landfill.**



Marcal 100% Premium Recycled Beverage Napkins – Sam's Club/Staples/Office Depot (<\$0.01/item) **Disposal: landfill.**



Marcal 100% Premium Recycled 17" x 15" Dinner Napkins – Sam's Club/Staples/Office Depot (\$0.02/item) **Disposal: landfill.**

Cutlery

Looking for eco-friendly cutlery is challenging. Plastic cutlery is not recyclable in Leon County, so it is best to find utensils that are made from recycled or plant-based materials.

Sustainable Earth Plastic Utensils – Staples (\$0.02/item)*



These plastic utensils are of medium weight and made of bio-based plastic content, which is designed to be compostable. These utensils are the most inexpensive option comparatively. Each utensil is sold separately. **Disposal: landfill.**

Eco Kloud Compostable Forks, Spoons, Knives – Costco (\$0.04/item)



These are made in the United States and consist primarily of compostable corn plastic. This cutlery is strong, sturdy, and highly heat tolerant. This makes them perfect for hot and cold foods. Each utensil is sold separately. **Disposal: landfill.**

Smaller Parties

Eco Kloud Compostable Party Pack – Costco (\$36.99)



Costco offers this compostable party pack that serves 50 guests. Included are 10" dinner plates, 6" dessert plates, 12oz paper cups, forks, spoons, and knives. All the items are compostable, and of course any unused items may be saved for later use. **Disposal: landfill.**

L.C. Industries Office Party Pack – Office Depot (\$26.39)



Office Depot offers a party pack that serves 25 guests. The pack includes paper plates and cups, which are biodegradable, 50% organic compostable cutlery, and two plastic trash bags. Any unused items may be saved for later use. **Disposal: landfill.**